

# **EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

**East Providence City Hall**

**145 Taunton Avenue**

**East Providence, Rhode Island 02914**

**June 14, 2011**

**Open Session**

**Mr. Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. School Committee Members present:**

**Luisa Abatecola, Stephen Furtado, Ryan Tellier, Chrissy Rossi, Charles Tsonos. Also in attendance: Dr. Mario F. Cirillo, Superintendent of Schools, Robert M. Silva, Esq. and Andrew Thomas, Esq.**

**The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag & Moment of Silence were observed.**

**Student Liaison Report – Andrew Butler presented a report.**

**Student/Teacher Recognition**

**Students from Kent Heights Chorus performed; High School Art Students were recognized, and the Martin Middle School Boys' Track Team members were congratulated and received certificates for winning the State Championship.**

**Public Comment I**

**Bill Murphy, Wetmore Avenue stated that he appreciated public comment to express his concerns about the deficit which has been going on for a long time; he finds it confusing and asked for**

clarification of the deficit. Mr. Tsonos stated that an answer is being prepared for the entire community by working with the legal team. Mr. Murphy stated that a deficit is simply that the schools spend more money than budgeted. Mr. Tsonos stated that he will defer to answering since a deficit reduction plan is being prepared.

Mr. Murphy explained that a deficit occurs when we spend more than allowed in a fiscal year; he recommended looking at the yearly financial audits and the accumulated deficit number in 2010; there has been criticism of the Superintendent and the last School Committee; however, the deficit of 2010 resulted from prior budgets and sometimes teacher contracts four to five years back; a lot of factors have been determined by management decisions that affect the audit; numbers can be misleading; the city manager is in office when the audit comes out, but did not have anything to do with the deficit because of lag time. He asked what the audited number is for 2010; which is about \$6.3 million. Mr. Tsonos pointed out an additional \$1.4 million since the last audit. Mr. Murphy stated that a \$6.3 deficit was revealed in the past May audit; there was no deficit last year, but a surplus. What happened was before Dr. Cirillo had control of the budget and he inherited a \$4 million deficit; there is no distinction between the annual deficit and the accumulated deficit over the years; at the end of fiscal year 2008, there was an accumulated deficit of \$5.2 million; the numbers are confusing and people may not be aware of lag time. He felt this was an attempt to undermine the Superintendent's credentials in the community. He asked the School Committee to make sure they have facts behind

fiscal responsibility, because it leaves the School Department open to criticism; our final big deficit was in 2008, but people are criticizing Dr. Cirillo for what was done by others. Mr. Tsonos stated that an answer is being prepared for Mr. Murphy and the city on the status of the deficit.

Cathy Grillo- Hamilton Street, asked Dr. Cirillo to detail areas where he saved money and how much.

Dr. Cirillo stated that since coming to the district, through concessions with four unions, we saved at least \$12 million; a restructuring plan was put into place which saved about \$1 million with a cost avoidance of \$6 million; roughly \$ 18 million plus in his administration. He just presented a restructuring plan which saved about a quarter of a million dollars and the School Committee put in full day Kindergarten. Dr. Cirillo stated that without those actions, we would have had a deficit of a double digit figure. Mrs. Grillo asked what this School Committee has done for the education of children.

Mr. Tsonos stated that under RI General Laws, the School Committee's reason to exist is to oversee School Department spending and effectiveness of what goes on in the School Department. Mrs. Grillo stated that someone with strength in education had been hired and has saved the schools and taxpayers money; the School Committee is there to help make better use of education dollars; parents are concerned about the discussion to remove Dr. Cirillo from his position.

Delila Reposo, Angell Drive questioned the time changes for schools

and asked if elementary times were changed; she noticed the times for dismissal at the high school and middle schools changed and asked how that will affect the buses; a 15 minute change is a problem for her .

Dr. Cirillo explained there is a four hour window of opportunity to transport students in order not to incur additional costs in running 32 buses; due to a problem in the morning where we go beyond that time allowance, adjustments were made to the schedule for middle schools and the high school. This change does not affect the elementary times. (H/S from 7:25 to 7:50 and 1:45 to 2:10PM; Middle Schools from 8:05 to 8:20 and 2:20PM to 2:35). Under the current contract, without this 15 minute change, we will incur a 3% increase in cost which represents \$94,000 for the district; he has done all he can not to cut programs or close schools since he has been in the district but may have to begin looking at programs.

Patti Streit, Indian Road, questioned the structure of the agenda with the executive session at the end of the meeting; she has been coming to meetings for years and it really bothers her that executive session is at the end of the meeting. Executive sessions were always at the beginning and this looks sneaky whether intentional or not; parents, teachers get up early and don't want to stick around all night; the Committee comes out, takes a vote with very few people in the audience and no recording of those later discussions. Mr. Furtado stated that in years past when executive session was held at the

beginning, the School Committee would sometimes not come out at 7:30PM, which posed a problem when students and guests are invited to attend; that is the reason for holding executive session after the open meeting. Mrs. Streit asked the Committee to consider her comments although she respects their reasoning.

#### **Reports: Superintendent's Report**

Report of Construction Manager, Farrar & Associates – Mary King, Finance Director, introduced Mr. James Farrar, Construction Project Manager and Mike Tabor, Project Manager who have been on board since March 11th to oversee two projects: district wide repair project of \$15 million of construction, and energy conservation project of about \$12 million. Highlights of report by Mr. Farrar: SMMA has just completed the first package of the overall project for life safety which was fast tracked in the contract and he has been working on pre-construction to get items out to bid; they completed that and hope to award after scope reviews; reference checks, background checks, and get the information to building committee next week. Life safety is an important part of the overall project that SMMA is working on to address major code violations from the local fire board and state fire commissioner. Scope of the life safety work includes areas of assembly; addressing sprinklers, fire alarm, and emergency lighting, up-grades taking place this summer when contracts awarded on the most important items to the fire board, planned to take place this summer when contracts are awarded; work will be done this summer at the high school, Riverside Middle and Martin Middle

School and the roof will be replaced at Hennessey School. He thanked the East Providence Fire Department for contributing their time to ensure that this package addresses the biggest concerns they have with life safety in schools; though not all problems are satisfied, we are hitting on major issues. Expect to release general contractor to mobilize. Balance of project considered Phase II scheduled for design completion in the fall of 2011 and out to contractor bidding for completion September of 2012. Secondary project is district wide energy conservation project awarded in 2010; value of \$11.6 to Johnson Controls for work over 15 schools, which was started in March this year; replacing boilers, asbestos abatement work; working on water conservation measures, retrofitting light fixtures; replacement of roof top exhaust fans; very aggressive work is planned for this summer. Johnson Controls and Farrar Associates will continue to follow up with RI Department of Education to ensure that steps are in conformance; they have had several meetings with RIDE and everything is moving along as planned and scheduled. Johnson Controls work will continue this year for completion in June 2012; their contract is a performance based contract with performance goals that have to be met; utilities companies are participating in that; Johnson Controls will be on board monitoring for the next 15 years. ESCO contracts are something new and are a great way for schools to tackle these types of projects to get buildings energy efficient. They meet regularly with the Building Committee to go through projects and bring in people when needed to keep Building Committee fully informed to be able to make final

decisions. Mr. Furtado asked if they are responsible for coordination of projects. Mr. Farrar coordinates on-going meetings with school staff members; this is a very aggressive schedule; working for commitment to work two shifts and weekends; discussion ongoing with bidders. Mr. Furtado asked for confirmation that the Project Manager is setting up the schedules. Mr. Farrar sets up milestone dates and reviews the schedules of bidders to see how they comply with ours and looks at sub-contractors to see if a doable process; there is a lot of work and management involved.

Mr. Tsonos asked about how much work we will be able to get done. Mr. Farrar is on board through the completion of projects. Life safety issues will be done before school opens this year; they will be preparing backup plans for any projects that are not completed or lag behind. Johnson Controls project is non-disruptive energy conservation work and will continue throughout the school year for completion in 2012. Mr. Tsonos requested that a written report be presented to the School Committee upon completion of projects. Mr. Farrar will provide written reports as they go along.

Report on FY2010 Audit, Bacon & Company – Mary King, Finance Director, introduced Pat Boucher of Bacon and Company, who provided an overview of the 2010 Audited Financial Statements and highlighted that the School Department ended FY 2010 with a total fund deficit of \$6,316,787.

Personnel Report on Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence – Items presented by Mrs. Whalen, Human Resources Manager:

## **RETIREMENT**

**David Souza**

**HVAC Specialist - Maintenance District**

**Effective June 30, 2011**

**Guy Facenda**

**ELL Teacher – Orlo Elementary School- Effective 6/24/2011**

**Emilia Tanguay**

**Teacher Assistant – Waddington Elementary School-Effective  
6/24/2011**

**Robert Silvestri- Social Studies Teacher High School – Effective  
6/24/2011**

**Rosemary Oliver**

**Teacher Assistant – High School – Effective 6/13/11**

## **RESIGNATION**

**Gregg Amore**

**Head Hockey Coach – High School - Effectively Immediately**

**Robert Geremia**

**Assistant Hockey Coach – High School – Effectively Immediately**



**Jacqueline Rose**

**Supervisory Assistant – Oldham Elementary School-Effective  
06/06/2011**

**Drew Hochman**

**Special Ed Teacher – East Providence High School – Effective  
6/24/2011**

**Donna Nawrocki**

**Kindergarten Teacher – Silver Spring Elementary–Effective5/20/2011**

**Jennine Cerra**

**Librarian – Whiteknact & Oldham Elementary Schools – Effective end  
of 2010-2011 school year**

## **PERSONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Michelle Cronin (1yr)**

**Social Studies Teacher – Riverside Middle School 2011-2012 School  
Year**

**Robin Silveira (1yr)**

**Director of Band – Riverside Middle School 2011-2012 School Year**

**Alexander Kanelos (1yr)**

**To assume Dean at East Providence High School 2011-2012 school**

**year**

**Shane Messier (1yr)**

**To assume Dean at East Providence High School 2011-2012 school year**

## **FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

**Kelly Fontaine-Carlos**

**4/5 Physical Ed/Health Teacher – Orlo Elementary School Effective 09/06/2011 13 weeks**

**Lori Ann Dunn**

**Reading Specialist – Elementary-Effective 05/25/2011 – 13 weeks**

**Cari Pedro**

**English Teacher – East Providence High School Effective 9/6/2011 (13 weeks)**

## **Consent Agenda**

**Approval of Minutes –A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to approve the minutes of School Committee meetings held on May 10, 2011 and May 24, 2011 and the Finance Subcommittee meeting held on May 24, 2011, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.**

## **Action Items**

**FY2010 Audited Financial Statements – Motion made by Mrs. Rossi to accept, seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 5-0.**

**Personnel Appointments/Recalls/Layoffs – Presented by Mrs. Whalen, Human Resources Manager:**

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Alexander Kanelos (1 Yr)**

**Dean - East Providence High School**

**Shane Messier (1 Yr)**

**Dean - East Providence High School**

**Ellen Will**

**Science Department Head East Providence High School 2011-2012  
School Year**

**RECALLS**

**Amanda Alferos**

**Social Studies Teacher (Due to resignation/retirement)**

**Michael Lefort**

**Social Studies Teacher (Due to Leave of Absence)**

**Lori Ann Dunn**

**K-6th grade Elementary Teacher (Due to New K – Waddington)**

**Darlene Simmons**

**Teacher Assistant (Due to retirement)**

**Marlene Walmsley**

**Teacher Assistant (Due to retirement)**

## **OPTION I- APPOINTMENTS**

**Jeff Gouveia**

**180 Day Custodian (To replace 180 day custodian called back to City)**

## **RECALLS FOR SUMMER**

**Jeff Gouveia 180 Day Custodian**

**Richard Pacheco 180 Day Custodian**

**Miguel Lopes 180 Day Custodian**

**Paul Mello 180 Day Custodian**

**Kenneth Foley 180 Day Custodian**

**David White 180 Day Custodian**

**Augustinho Linhares 180 Day Custodian**

**Dr. Cirillo explained the details of both options for hiring custodians and the salary and benefits attached to the two options which are budgeted: by contract these positions are released every year in June; School Committee can go in either of two directions; extend seven custodians to work for summer months (\$42,308 plus pension benefits) or Option II keeps them as substitutes; (need all seven for**

summer); using subs in Option II is a problem because we have to cover vacations for other employees and the aggressive bond work schedule will also complicate the summer clean up. (Cost is \$28,000 with no benefits). In August this would back on the docket. Both options were presented to the School Committee with relative costs to request a decision.

Mrs. Rossi stated that Option I appealed to her because of the amount of construction work in addition to the regular summer work. Motion by Mrs. Rossi to approve Option I, (keep seven custodians), seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 5-0.

Mr. Furtado motioned to accept recalls put forth, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Mr. Tellier asked if there are any special certifications or training for the Dean positions. Dr. Cirillo explained that these individuals are working toward administrator positions; there is an agreement with the teachers union about these positions and to add five extra days before/after school or both; a stipend in the position to stipulate two days detention a week, 10 extra minutes in the morning and attendance at school events. The job description has been accepted by the union, and there were several applicants for the position. Dr. Cirillo explained this is a good opportunity to have two administrators training on the job.

**Motion on the floor by Mrs. Abatecola to accept appointments, no second**

**Mr. Tellier made a motion to accept the two dean positions and the Science Department Head and to table the Facilities Manager position, seconded Mr. Furtado. Vote 4-0; (Mrs. Abatecola voted nay). Vote 4-1 to approve.**

**Mrs. Rossi asked the Chair for clarification on the vote: Mr. Tsonos stated that the vote approved two dean positions and a department head and tabled a decision on the Facilities Manager position. Mr. Tsonos advised that the position is being tabled for further consideration; the consolidation issue will be taken up at another meeting before June 30th along with discussion on the deficit reduction plan.**

**Discussion: Mrs. Rossi wished to vote nay; she advised that with a \$30 million construction project underway, someone from our department should be in place who knows the work schedule and infrastructure and she did not want to be exposed in any way with this project on such a tight schedule.**

**Mary King, Finance Director stated that she did not see how pushing off filling this position would help the deficit; her concern is that our facilities still need to be managed; schools close down, but the rest of the agency does not and that work is being done by the facilities**

crew. This position went through a solid interview process with unanimous approval to send three candidates forward; she asked the School Committee to think about the effect this will have on the district this summer and going forward.

Dr. Cirillo stated that under Title 16 as Superintendent, he is responsible to fully man the organization; he asked about this position at a prior meeting and with no objection, he moved ahead with interviewing three finalists and chose Mr. Feola for his particular skill set which he thought was valuable to the district because he has historical knowledge and he was instrumental in moving forward with the \$30 million bond project. The Superintendent does not support putting off the vote and stated that consolidating the facilities manager position would result in several complications going forward. The Superintendent pressed the School Committee to take a vote while considering a \$30 million bond project and the need for someone to lead the department and to work with the contractors.

Dr. Cirillo stated that regarding consolidation, we are aggressively moving forward with the IT Department and analyzing data from other departments in order to make a report to the City. Hiring the Facilities Manager sets the stage for someone to head that department and look at other positions in that department. The Superintendent recommended strongly that the School Committee make a decision now because we have a tight schedule in the construction work of the \$30 million bond, which is only 30% of what needs to be done; we

**need someone who knows the department to work with consultants and contractors on these issues. Dr. Cirillo pressed the Committee to not table this item.**

**Mr. Tellier stated that his reasoning for tabling the position is that people have worked on the consolidation issue for more than a month and appointing a Facilities Manager could tie our hands in the consolidation process in the long run. He would be open to approving Mr. Feola as Interim or Acting Facilities Director until consolidation work is completed. Dr. Cirillo pointed out that the City recently hired a Finance Director. Mr. Tellier felt that all agreed to look at every option. Dr. Cirillo pointed out this is a change in the motion already put forward.**

**Mr. Tavares explained that the construction project has been in the works for two years and not to have continuity and knowledge of what is going on would be devastating; there are meetings with the project manager every day and scheduling decisions need to be made for summer cleaning and ordering of supplies and that this is not a good time to put this decision on hold or start with someone who is not familiar with the department.**

**Mr. Tellier felt that the School Committee needed to be diligent about reviewing the matter of Facilities Manager in order to make an informed decision; he would not appoint an Interim Facilities Manager until he has all the information from the consolidation report and**



**cannot make a decision until all the information is received.**

**In response to Mr. Furtado's question to legal counsel, if the School Committee can re-vote or re-do the prior vote, Mr. Silva stated that in order to vote on the item again, someone on the prevailing side must move to reconsider that vote and it must be approved by a majority of the School Committee. Mrs. Rossi said she never voted on it.**

**Mr. Tsonos stated that a vote was taken and seconded; Mr. Tellier and Mrs. Rossi wanted to revisit the vote to table, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola to revisit. All voted aye.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Tellier to approve the appointment of Mr. Feola as Interim Facilities Manager pending the outcome of the consolidation committee, seconded by Mr. Furtado. Discussion: Mrs. Rossi stated there is no formal consolidation committee in place.**

**Discussion about consolidation committee; Mr. Tsonos stated that the Superintendent and City Manager were supposed to formulate a consolidation plan; but there was not a definite date set.**

**Mrs. Rossi had concerns about the Building Committee and the tight summer schedule to get work done; on the life safety issues, the State Fire Marshall wants an update in August. She stated that no conversations have taken place for consolidation of the Facilities Manager position and we are not even close on that position; also contracts have to be settled, which could take more time; will Mr.**

**Feola be willing to take that position temporarily. Mr. Tsonos stated he would only support a motion for Mr. Feola to stay in his current position while acting as a Facilities Manager.**

**Mr. Furtado pointed out that in an earlier report, it was stated that part of the construction manager's job was to schedule meetings with our people and as Construction Manager, we are paying for that.**

**Dr. Cirillo stated that this would be splitting Mr. Feola between two jobs and he would not be amenable or ask him to do that; even with Farrar doing the scheduling, Mr. Tavares explained that it is a busy job under normal circumstances. As Superintendent, in order to move forward with a facilities plan, to move forward with consolidation, and with two retirements, he needs to have Mr. Feola in place first in order to present a full report with a plan and rationale. He cannot support Mr. Feola working in two positions with the tight time constraints on the construction that could jeopardize the bond work. Mr. Tavares stated that Farrar's scheduling starts with his department; they need to be informed from us first on scheduling issues.**

**.**

**Mrs. Abatecola pointed out that the general contractor meets with the Facilities Manager on a continuous basis to discuss the plans; Mr. Feola may not be interested in the Interim position as Facilities Manager and a decision cannot be made without asking him first.**

**Mr. Tsonos stated that a motion was made, seconded and on the floor. Discussion: Mr. Furtado asked to repeat the motion. Mr. Tellier stated that the motion was to appoint Mr. Feola as Facilities Manager on an interim basis until the deficit reduction commission and consolidation reports are received. Discussion: about vote: Mr. Tsonos said the motion was made and seconded. Vote: Mrs. Abatecola, nay; Mr. Furtado, nay; Mr. Tellier, aye; Mrs. Rossi, nay; Mr. Tsonos, aye. Motion Failed 3-2.**

### **Requisitions – Bill List**

<b>Warrant #1102</b>	<b>6/10/11</b>	<b>\$ 1,498,825.08</b>
<b>Warrant #1103</b>	<b>6/10/11</b>	<b>\$ 1,161.51</b>
<b>Warrant #1104</b>	<b>6/10/11</b>	<b>\$ 455,086.95</b>
<b>Warrant #1106</b>	<b>6/10/11</b>	<b>\$ 320,591.18</b>

**Motion: Mrs. Rossi/Second: Mr. Furtado. Vote 5-0.**

### **Old Business**

**Deficit Reduction Plan – Mr. Tsonos stated that the deficit is constantly in front of us and credited Mr. Conley's committee for bringing numbers to the forefront; a combined city debt through 2015 could be as much as \$50 million, which is unacceptable; Mr. Tsonos stated that there is no money out there and looking at this debt in the**

city is breathtaking. We need to and have directed the Superintendent to come up with a deficit reduction plan. Mrs. Rossi stated that is what we joined forces with the city to do when we formed a Deficit Elimination Committee. Mr. Tsonos stated that each department has been charged with coming up with a plan, which the Auditor General expects to receive.

Dr. Cirillo stated that the charge was the creation of a deficit elimination committee chaired by Mr. Conley to come up with a city deficit reduction plan; they have worked to provide figures and projections and they committed to come up with a plan to address the historical accumulated deficit as a combined effort of the City Council and School Committee; it was approved that the committee would come out with a recommendation for the City and a report to the Auditor General.

Mr. Tsonos said that what has happened is that nothing has gone forward to the Auditor General since the deficit reduction plan submitted last October was rejected by the Auditor General concerning our new deficit. What Mr. Conley has been working on is very staggering numbers, but does not relieve us of our responsibility to report a plan to the Auditor General under RI General Laws.

Mary King stated that both she and Dr. Cirillo must have misunderstood the charge of the Committee chaired by Mr. Conley. She reported there is no place for the School Department to make

further cuts in the budget; 94% of the budget is salary, benefits, and special education costs and the rest is discretionary spending. The Deficit Reduction Committee was put in place to work together with schools to come up with a plan; the last plan submitted to the Auditor General did not pass; payments are owed to vendors and there are issues on the city side also, which is why the Committee was put together; this is a City of East Providence issue, since it affects the bond rating. If we can't work together, there is no place else to go, since we are looking for millions of dollars. She commented at the last Deficit Elimination meeting that if no new sources of revenue are found, we need to dramatically change the way education is performed in East Providence and it is up to the city to get this done. Ms. King thought everyone was working together because there is no other place else to go.

Five minute recess taken. Meeting resumed.

Old Business - Consolidation Update – already covered.

### **New Business**

EP Local Advisory Committee members Mrs. Laurie Brown, Co-Chair and Mr. Richard Moore, Secretary presented a report and a new membership list for approval. A motion was made by Mr. Tellier to approve, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0. Mrs. Abatecola thanked Mrs. Karen Rebello for years of service to this committee.

**Mr. Tsonos addressed the item on the docket concerning personnel. Legal counsel, Mr. Silva asked to articulate events prior to the meeting; he stated that in order for the School Committee to discuss an issue in executive session under RI General Laws, he was asked to submit written notification to Dr. Cirillo that the School Committee intended to discuss his performance on June 14, 2011 and to place the Superintendent on leave with pay. Dr. Cirillo was notified by regular mail and email that this matter would be discussed in executive session unless he requested that discussion be held in open session. Dr. Cirillo responded that he wanted the discussion to be held in open session. As a result of the response from Dr. Cirillo that he did not want his performance discussion in executive session, the School Committee must discuss his performance in open session; any motion to place the Superintendent on administrative leave must also be made in open session**

**Dr. Cirillo wanted the public to understand that the reason he objected to executive session is that the agenda did not specify his job performance, which is a violation of the open meet regulations. Also he received his notification yesterday after hours informing him of the School Committee's intention to discuss his job performance and to place him on administrative leave, which he believes was not sufficient notice for him to obtain legal counsel. He did not believe the executive session was legal because it was not posted properly. He wanted discussion in open session, but not to have it tonight; the agenda did not specify job performance and he questioned the**

**legality of the discussion.**

**Mr. Silva explained that he left messages for Dr. Cirillo on his cell phone earlier in the day and sent an email; when Dr. Cirillo called him back, he explained the situation to him. Mr. Silva said it is not his opinion that counts if this is proper and effective notice under the open meeting laws; he is comfortable with the discussion he had with Dr. Cirillo on Monday and the notice about what would happen on Tuesday.**

**Mrs. Abatecola asked if it is appropriate to add an item to the public agenda when not already stated on the agenda. Mr. Silva referred to Item M on the agenda and the discussion regarding personnel which allows for public notification about discussion to be held in open session which would have been in executive session; however, Dr. Cirillo requested that discussion be held in open session, which is his right. This matter was discussed the day before with the Superintendent; the law that presently exists says the person shall be notified in advance in writing, which did take place by his office on Monday. If the Superintendent believed there was insufficient notice, he can take whatever action he wishes to the appropriate forum.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to place the Superintendent on administrative leave until further notice, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Under discussion, Mrs. Rossi asked where this action came from.**

**Mr. Tsonos advised that the Superintendent is the Chief Executive agent to the School Committee, has administrative authority over the School Department, and is responsible for supervision according to RI General Laws. Mr. Tsonos stated that he believed we need to chart a new course to address difficult and unresolved issues which lie ahead for the city and schools and the significant challenges of operating with a \$1.4 million dollar deficit in October 2011 on top of a \$6.3 million dollar deficit from prior years. In moving forward, the School Committee needs to work cooperatively with the city on a deficit reduction plan that produces a positive result.**

**Mrs. Rossi asked how the decision was made and who the Chair discussed it with. Mr. Tsonos explained that there had been on-going discussions which have been part of the minutes and that it is no secret about the schools' finances and how he feels about the deficit reduction plan; we need to come up with a plan to address the financial difficulties of the city.**

**Mrs. Rossi stated that the deficit reduction committee has been working on the problem; she did not understand how paying the Superintendent to stay home would help; she felt this was the worst plan in a long time and wished to be on record that she is completely against it and will not be voting for it.**

**Mrs. Abatecola asked what the plan was moving forward after placing the Superintendent on administrative leave tonight. Mr. Tsonos**



**stated that it would be discussed in executive session.**

**Mrs. Abatecola was concerned about not having a Facilities Manager or Superintendent to oversee the construction work this summer, and teacher negotiations; she was not comfortable with this decision and agreed with Mrs. Rossi's comments regarding placing the Superintendent on leave.**

**Mr. Tsonos said as he goes throughout the city and discusses very serious subjects like the deficit reduction plan and consolidation, there is no money similar to other cities and towns and the state; we owe vendors millions of dollars; he does hear anyone offering to pay more taxes to pay our bills. This discussion is about paying bills and looking for answers to cover the shortfall.**

**In response to a request from Mrs. Abatecola, Mr. Silva advised that discussion cannot be held in executive session tonight regarding the future plans of the department because it is not on the agenda.**

**He recommended scheduling a special meeting for an executive session or at the next regularly scheduled meeting. Mr. Tsonos stated that in the meantime, the two assistant Superintendents can step in as both have Superintendent Certification.**

## **Public Comment II**

**Mary King advised that the bills were unpaid for many years before**

**Dr. Cirillo arrived and she has gone over this with School Committee members before. As Director of Finance she failed to see how placing the Superintendent on leave would help to solve the problem since he is key in the Department; she did not know how we can move forward without a plan. If the plan is to turn the School Department over to the city, all employees of the department should know the School Committee's plan.**

**Robert Carlin, 66 Merritt Road, Riverside mentioned that all School Committee should have the use of a microphone. He disagreed with Mr. Silva's ruling regarding the meeting rules and will file an open meetings complaint with the Attorney General's Office regarding this meeting.**

**Bill Murphy, Wetmore Avenue, discussion about the School Department not paying its bills while discussion about putting Dr. Cirillo on administrative leave is a sensitive matter; a \$5.2 million dollar deficit was accumulated before he arrived; what could Dr. Cirillo do about bills not paid five years ago; he cautioned Mr. Tsonos about who is advising him. He thought that Dr. Cirillo implemented many new programs and the School Committee needed someone with those skills. The he plan submitted to the Auditor General was a good plan, was workable and minimally disruptive, but required money up front. The main point is that the Superintendent brought savings to the department of \$18 million; we would have been in receivership otherwise. He felt the School Committee will be blamed.**

**This is unfair and factually wrong if not paying bills is blamed on the Superintendent. If there is an employee action, there could be a huge financial liability against School Committee personally. In his opinion, this Superintendent has concern for the welfare of students and teachers and that decisions made in this forum should be based on truth.**

**Mary Nascimento did not agree with everything that has been done in the School Department, but she agrees with Mrs. Abatecola about the bond issue and paying Dr. Cirillo to stay home; the School Committee could advise Dr. Cirillo what he should be doing; it does not make sense to pay him to stay home; this was already done with someone else and just makes the deficit higher.**

**Robert Faria, 132 Cushman Avenue, commended Mrs. Abatecola and Mrs. Rossi about expressing their viewpoint on addressing the needs of kids. When he was on the School Committee, other Superintendents were blasted for the same thing but not put on leave.**

**East Providence is in the same crisis position as every other city; there are huge problems with financial resources to fund education and a funding formula problem. The last School Committee was voted out because they were not addressing the needs of kids; this School Committee is doing the same; there is no change, it's just who you represent. Dr. Cirillo made changes based on data which he believed would address needs of students going forward; we are now putting the onus on Dr. Cirillo because he has not taken care of bills from ten**

years ago. If this is just about finances, the \$300,000 for full day Kindergarten could have been saved and used toward the deficit. Mr. Faria spoke about student issues such as bullying and the fact that kids need a lot of help today. He felt that Dr. Cirillo has implemented changes in administrative processes that have benefited students. We are losing the best kids, because we are not providing for them; conversations have taken place about standards being raised or lowered. Now we are calling on Dr. Cirillo because he did not take care of bills from years ago. This School Committee has already added to and impacted that number. Dr. Cirillo is not here for the bottom line; he has bettered education for children; he felt there would be a backlash from parents.

Mr. Furtado asked about comments regarding ten year old bills. Mary King explained that the School Department runs out of cash earlier each year; when she started last July, cash ran out in August and vendors were told we could not pay them until November; every year we take new cash to pay old bills; at beginning of this year, we tried to eliminate old bills and we are just sliding the scale; there are no ten year old invoices, but we will run out of cash in June, July to October no one will get paid, and we will build up a backlog of invoices which will become 9-10 months old. Mary King explained there has been a deficit for years before she arrived and others have tried to address it in the budget; for any School Committee or prior School Committee to say the number was not there is shameful; these are audited numbers and the financial issues should not be a

**surprise to anyone; the financial issues which escalated when Dr. Cirillo arrived in 2008, have become a bigger problem every year; this is beyond the Superintendent and Finance Director making decisions and we were supposed to be working together on solving it.**

**Mr. Tsonos stated that because of Band-Aids, we have to make dramatic changes; if this was addressed in past years, we would not have this deficit.**

**Mary King explained that every year, there have been decreases in state aid; the state is in deplorable condition and continues to push more on the districts every year; to insinuate these are issues which have not been addressed is not correct. The School Department does not generate revenue; our funding decreases every year while expenses increase and there is no place else to go; we need to make dramatic changes in contracts, some of which have already been made, but there are issues which continue to build. We are well beyond the realm of cutting anymore and this situation is disturbing to her.**

**Mr. Furtado felt that information received from the Superintendent to the School Committee has been less than forthcoming over the last six months; many items requested were not given while the School Committee was trying to make policy changes.**

**Sharon Kocon, a parent, complained that Pupil Personnel Services**

and the Superintendent did not respond to her requests in a timely manner regarding the lack of speech and occupational therapy services; she believes her child's IEP was not addressed properly and she has been advocating for services; she was upset and frustrated with the School Department. She just received a letter with information regarding the upcoming school year.

Mike McGuinn heard the Superintendent say he saved money; not one dime has gone to reduce the deficit, but we have saved \$12 million; \$450,000 was shifted from a grant to cover the cost of a building; the closing never took place; funds are usually restricted; ½ million dollars was earmarked for the previous deficit but was used to balance the 2010 budget. In this fiscal year prior to the 2011 budget being approved, we were notified by the state that \$1.2 million to come to schools was going to be offset with state aide; that \$1.2 was put in this year's budget by the Superintendent knowing he would not get it. This year there is a \$1.4 million deficit; he asked where can we get money to shift for that.

Nick Faria, Cushman Avenue, a student, agreed with Mrs. Abatecola and Mrs. Rossi that it does not make sense to have the Superintendent at home with pay; he felt that what the Superintendent has done for the schools has been unbelievable.

Sandy Barone, 12 Weeden Avenue, Rumford questioned the Superintendent as to why a second deficit reduction plan was not

submitted to the Auditor General when requested in January or February after the first one was rejected last fall. Now it is June and no plan has been provided; the state does not know the plan to get rid of the deficit and citizens do not know where our money is, how it is spent; she doesn't understand why a second plan was not submitted.

Dr. Cirillo responded that we are in the process of doing that right now; the first plan was a responsible plan but the Auditor General rejected it because there was more money at the end rather than the beginning.

Mrs. Barone knows that Mr. Conley is chairing a committee, but asked is it not the Superintendent's responsibility to come up with a deficit plan which has been a long time coming.

Dr. Cirillo explained that the Auditor General sends letters to the City of East Providence, not the Superintendent of Schools.

Mary King provided an explanation that we did come up with a plan which explored the idea of TANS whereby the city borrows to relieve the cash flow issues; we did put a proposal forth, but the Auditor General did not approve the original plan because it was back loaded.

Mr. Conley wanted to work out a deficit reduction plan; the city has to decide and implement because schools cannot borrow the money.

**Mr. Tsonos felt that some of the push back on that idea was that it was using a credit card to pay bills and a lot of thought needs to be given to taking a loan to pay a loan.**

**Mary Teixeira, a teacher at Silver Spring - what a difference a couple of years make; Mr. Faria said the onus was on Dr. Cirillo now and all the problems of the deficit are his; it is absolutely not all his fault; reasons things not fixed is because of cooperation and not being divided, she knows how he feels because for two and one half years she felt that way when teachers were blamed for the deficit by living large; this is a combination of a lot of things and we are facing the same situation today. She asked everyone to work together because that is the only way things will be fixed.**

**Fred Ripka, 9 Cousins Ave, witnessed an abomination – Mr. Tellier not appointing Facilities Director because of consolidation; putting a halt on consolidation; sending the Superintendent home with pay; he does not understand how it is productive to take the leader from the School Department out while looking for a plan to consolidate our debt. Until we attack core problems of contracts, the financial problems will continue; we are sending the Superintendent home with pay with no bottom line fix for the problem and we can't touch the teachers or any other contracts. The numbers are going up every year; he does not get 3% raises every year.**

**Mr. Tellier responded that in the past, the Superintendent has had**



good and bad ideas and there have been several issues with Dr. Cirillo not being forthcoming and withholding information; there is a need for dramatic change and we need to move in that direction to reduce the deficit. He felt we have competent staff in the administration building.

Vote on the motion on the floor regarding placing the Superintendent on paid administrative leave until further notice: Roll call vote: Mrs. Abatecola, nay; Mr. Furtado, aye; Mr. Tellier, aye; Mrs. Rossi nay; Mr. Tsonos, aye. Vote 3-2 to approve.

Mr. Furtado pointed out that there is a 0% raise this year in the teacher's contract.

### **Announcements**

Mrs. Abatecola announced the building playground project at Kent Heights on June 25 and requested that members of the community volunteer.

Mrs. Rossi stated that what happened tonight was disgusting to pay someone to stay home; she thanked and congratulated the Waddington PTA for meeting their playground goal.

Mr. Furtado commented that graduation will be held on Friday evening at Pierce Field and wished good luck to the seniors.

**Mr. Furtado announced that the Committee would seek to convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1) and Collective Bargaining, and Litigation/Pending Litigation -R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2).**

**Mr. Silva, legal counsel announced that there would be no executive session discussion of personnel as listed under executive session.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to move to executive session, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.**

**The School Committee returned to open session. All members were present. Motion was made by Mr. Furtado to return to open session and to seal the minutes of the executive session, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0. (No votes were taken in executive session).**

**A motion was made by Mrs. Abatecola to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant**

**Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee**